DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

MARCH 1940

VOL 1 No 3 PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY FILM CENTRE 34 SOHO SQUARE LONDON W1 THREEPENCE

1 NOTES OF THE MONTH
3 NATIONAL PUBLICITY
4 THE CANADIAN FRONT
A report from Ottawa on production progress
5 SOUR GRAPES?
A discussion of an attack on Hollywood's Grapes of Wrath
6 NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS
7 STORY FILM OF THE MONTH
Reviews of The Stars Look Down
9 CHILDREN'S FILM OF THE MONTH
Reviews of The Wizard of Oz
10 FILMS FOR PRIMITIVE PEOPLES
The development of new educational techniques
13 DOCUMENTARY IN THE U.S.A.
News from American Film Center
13 BRITISH DOCUMENTARY ACTIVITY
Current production notes
15 FILM SOCIETY NEWS
With reviews of the latest Foreign Films
16 BOOK REVIEWS
The Film Answers Back, War Begins at Home, *and others*
17 NON-THEATRICAL FILM LIBRARIES
With a review of the British Council Film Catalogue
18 CORRESPONDENCE
18 FACT AND OPINION
News and views from all quarters

The Imperial Theme

WAR BRINGS TO normally unthinking citizens a deeper consciousness of the Commonwealth. It may even, during the next few years, gradually get people into the way of realising the difference between the Dominions and the Crown Colonies —a point on which there is still widespread ignorance. And as the question of Imperialism is likely to loom larger and larger both during the war and after, this is all to the good. By the same token, it looks as though the cinema will soon become an important factor in Imperial relations. Elsewhere in this issue will be found encouraging news of Canada's first drive towards a film policy of her own; and, at the other end of the scale, news of the first efforts to harness the experience of educational film technique to the needs of primitive peoples in Africa and elsewhere. Meantime John Grierson is visiting New Zealand and Australia, under the aegis of the Imperial Relations Trust, and it is to be hoped that his experience in drafting Canadian film policy will be of assistance to the Governments of those Dominions too. Some form of inter-Dominion public relations service would be of immense value in peacetime, let alone in war; and the idea of establishing Empire Cinemas in London and in all main Dominion cities is perhaps not entirely chimerical. If their size was no greater than that of our present newsreel theatres, and if quality productions from the Dominions and Colonies were readily and constantly available, they could probably command good and regular audiences. It is certainly true that whatever mandatory (or other) system might arrive in the future, the continuance of relationships between Britain and overseas would and could not cease. The future of films in this matter is important, and the prospects are already very promising.

The Film Society Movement

THE PRESERVATION of cultural activities during wartime is a matter of vital national importance. Last autumn there was some ground for fearing that this side of our life was going to be severely curtailed. Since then, however, there have been several significant movements, such as the provision by London casts and companies of good plays in the provinces,

the return of Sunday afternoon concerts, the re-opening of many Galleries, and the public-spirited efforts of Myra Hess and her colleagues in providing lunch-hour music in the National Gallery. To this list may now be added the determination of the Film Society movement to play its part. The black outlook of last September might well have been an incentive to film societies—many of which operate on slender finances—to play safe by closing down for the duration. Almost the reverse has happened. As is revealed on another page of this issue, many societies have continued their work, and in some cases have expanded their activities. For this in several cases they have been rewarded with increased membership. In Scotland, where the movement is strengthened by a well-organised Federation, six out of ten member societies are in full operation. In the English provinces, activities in such centres as Tyneside and Manchester are in full swing. London, which tended to lag behind, has at last got two societies in operation, although the Film Society itself shows (most regrettably) no signs of life. It is impossible to underestimate the value of the work of the Film Society movement in improving audience approach to the cinema, in making important cultural films available to large numbers of people who would otherwise never have a chance of seeing them, and in encouraging free criticism and discussion of the Film. Their wartime energies should reap deserved rewards in increased membership and greater financial prosperity.

Anthropology

THE APPEARANCE at the London Polytechnic Cinema of a most admirable travelogue entitled *Dark Rapture* is a reminder of the curious lack of serious anthropological material so far recorded by the film. Expeditions to tropical or little-explored countries are hazardous and expensive undertakings, and the result has in most cases been that the financiers—or the companies to whom the material is sold—have seldom scrupled to substitute sensationalism for accuracy, and even to indulge in enough palpable fakery to cast suspicion on the genuine material. Honourable exceptions, such as *Moana*, *Grass*, *Nanook*, *Chang*, *Voyage au Congo*, *Song of Ceylon* are few and far between. Yet *Dark Rapture* shows that nothing is lost by sticking closely to the genuine; its interest, even in those sequences which are truly sensational, is never fictitious, while as a pure documentation of the habits and customs of the little-known tribes of Central Africa, it is surely of scientific as well as generalised value. The problem of anthropological study by film is thus proved to be largely financial; and as it is difficult to expect commercial film companies to place box-office principles second to scientific integrity, it is to be presumed that genuine films of this type will continue to be rare, unless some other solution is found. Would it not be possible for Governments with Colonial possessions, and Geographical and Ethnographical institutes all over the world, to form and finance a central international organisation which would enable competent film makers to record the social and religious life of races, many of which, through impact with the West, are already losing the purity of their aboriginal culture? Such a plan—certainly in times of peace—would be welcomed not merely by the expert, but by the man-in-the-street in all parts of the world.

The Imperial Institute

SIR HARRY LINDSAY'S Annual Report makes, as usual, brave reading, especially the sections dealing with the Empire and G.P.O. Film Libraries. The demand for the films, which are largely used by schools, guilds, and all sorts of educational institutions, has once again increased. In 1939 some 37,000 copies were loaned, and at the same time the stock of films has been increased by 300 copies. A new and complete catalogue has also been issued. If anyone ever doubted the immense value of the service represented by this Library, the magnificent service it has supplied to teachers during the difficult conditions of evacuation are a significant answer. The real problem of the Library is to provide enough films to meet the demand. Ordinary wear and tear, no less than frequent careless handling on the part of inexperienced borrowers, make the life of the average print remarkably short. The Institute's own allocation for renewals and purchase of films is inevitably but regrettably small, and were it not for grants from such bodies as the Imperial Relations Trust, and presentations by Empire Governments, commercial concerns and the like, it would be almost impossible for the Institute to fulfil its minimum functions in this matter. There is a strong case to be made for some form of extra grant to strengthen this service on which so many educationists have now learnt to rely, and which they could, if its scope were widened, use to an even greater extent.

An International Convention

UNDER THE Geneva Convention of 1933 countries pledged themselves to exempt certified educational films from customs duties. The convention has already been ratified by a number of nations, including Belgium, Italy, Sweden, India, and the United Kingdom. Under the original arrangement exemption from duty was acquired through a certificate issued by the International Institute of Educational Cinematography in Rome. As far as this country was concerned, the exemption was in the hands of the Board of Education acting on the advice of the British Film Institute. The situation today, however, is somewhat different. In 1938 an agreement was made at Geneva transferring the certification of films from the Rome Institute (now defunct) to the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation in Paris. The United Kingdom has not yet ratified this agreement, but is expected to do so very shortly. The free circulation of cultural films becomes more and more important every year, and the sooner the new agreement is regularised over here the better. Not only film societies, but also scientific and educational associations of all sorts depend on being freed from crippling import duties, and the stress of war must not be allowed to modify the provisions of the original convention.

Comings and Goings

THOMAS BAIRD has resigned from our Editorial Board on his appointment to the Film Division of the Ministry of Information. We are sorry to lose him, but glad to report that Edgar Anstey (Film Centre) is taking his place.

NATIONAL PUBLICITY

IN WARTIME, no less than in peace, films which seek honestly to portray civilised communities cannot avoid social problems. Education, housing, food supply, working conditions, individual liberty; these are the things for which men fight in wartime no less than in peace. A people at war may attempt to reject the consideration of them in its propaganda, but only at the risk of presenting to the world the hollow shell of a nation.

Today, national publicity has become a wartime weapon and the necessity arises to reconsider the motive and angle of approach in filming sociological subjects. The social organisation of any community is immature, and reporting by film in this field, whether British or foreign, can seldom be exclusively favourable if the whole story is to be told honestly. Since frankness in self-criticism is always a potential gift to the counter-propagandist, peacetime standards of objectivity which rejected partisanship and ill-founded self-congratulation must be justified anew, or modified to satisfy the demands of the war effort. In a war between countries professing rival social ideologies which compete for world support, the temptation is away from truth in advertising. Are the rewards for resisting temptation to be found only in heaven, or is truth a sword to which we can trust our destinies even in modern warfare?

Britain's wartime record in honest self-examination, particularly the record of the press, gives as yet no cause for shame. No country at war in modern times has enjoyed greater freedom of editorial comment, although in broadcasting our record is scarcely so good. In films, although there have been as yet insufficient releases of subjects related to the war, or to the British social system, to reveal the current tendencies, a few observations may be made. To set against the implicit criticisms of private coal ownership and trade unions permitted in *The Stars Look Down* is the shelving of the plan to film *Love on the Dole*.

Our policy of national publicity by film is yet to be determined, and in drafting it we begin with the advantage of a clean slate. But a policy must be written and it must be a policy which provides for the screen examination of social issues, whether controversial or not. For these can never be official secrets. If we continue to starve our cinema audiences at home or abroad of information on principles so vital that we are willing to go to war for them, it must be at the cost of throwing those principles open to world-wide doubt. Once the decision is taken to reveal that Britain is in fact a democracy we are faced with a further choice. We can present for the examination of a critical world a democracy that never fails; or we can present a democracy that often partially succeeds. Fiction or fact? In the long run fact will pay best; will it pay us best in the comparatively short run of war?

In reviewing the British Council's film on evacuation *The Times* says:

> "*These Children Are Safe*, good as it is, would have been even better had it always been remembered that it is the duty of a documentary camera to give a portrait of its subject that does not slur over its less pleasant features."

Here is a definition of documentary duties with which no one can decently quarrel. Yet the consequences of accepting it today must be faced. It means that when we are publicising to the world our national wartime achievements we shall not pretend that things are better than they are, that we are always right, that our system of government is perfect. It means that we must not conceal unpleasant truths in obedience to the fear that by revealing them we furnish Dr Goebbels with ammunition to use against us.

These are the consequences of a policy of frank and honest screening of our wartime social problems. What risks do they entail of loss of prestige and support abroad, or of faltering resolution at home?

If we may seem to make a present of anti-British propaganda to Dr Goebbels that need not disturb us. He is unlikely to be kept in ignorance of any British social problem by its absence from the screen. He is in fact more likely to make capital of suppression than of frank admission, since, in commenting on *The Stars Look Down*, his Hamburg announcer was mainly concerned to draw attention to the omission of Cronin's House of Commons scene.

What would be the effect at home of films fairly representing the critical domestic issues of the day? Would British morale be weakened by films which articulated the inevitable dislocations of war, which propounded solution and counter-solution, which took the man-in-the-street to the legislator's table and showed him where he fitted into the scheme of things, and why? The man-in-the-street must believe it is his war or lose it; and he cannot fight blindfold.

Can it be argued that to admit that our democracy is no lightning cure for every wartime ill would deprive the neutral countries of all faith in us and all hope in our victory? If so, the American film tradition of self-criticism should already have laid democracy low before a totalitarian blow could be struck. But that has hardly been the effect of such public laundering of democratic dirty linen as we have seen in films like *Black Fury*, *They Gave Him a Gun*, *They Never Forget*, and many courageous *March of Time* items; films of a type which America has certainly not abandoned in her lately intensified determination to preserve the system of Government she is still prepared to criticise in *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* and *Dust be My Destiny*. What influences have such films had upon our own estimate of American prospects of success in overcoming any obstacle, internal or external, and evolving a better order of things? Controversy is the life-blood of democracy and America, by her self-criticism, has demonstrated a vitality which springs from roots in the people. By her freedom of speech, the essential symbol of democracy, America has demonstrated a full-blooded vigour which has done much to give her the reputation of the world's greatest democracy.

Today the strength of a nation is measured by the satisfaction of its people. Britain has a record in social service unsurpassed in the world, and publicity for the progress made since the last war in such fields as housing and nutrition can be used to win us support abroad and to reinforce our determination at home. But it is not enough to record our past achievements. Com-

placent and over-optimistic publicity is distrusted in a world which has put up the barriers against tendentious propaganda. To carry conviction we must show that the vigorous democratic spirit which fought for British social reform still lives to preserve, in spite of war, a maximum of our gains and even in certain fields to increase them. The choice of method in national film publicity still lies open. We can make films of a democracy of contented cowmen. Or we can show a people who, by debate and discussion, are arguing their way towards better things; a people who believe that the threat of foreign totalitarian stupidities is the immediate but not the only obstacle to be overcome, who believe that the sacrifice of democratic practices in fighting that threat would leave Britain without hope of a better national order in the post-war world.

THE CANADIAN FRONT

In the January issue our Canadian Correspondent outlined the plan and purpose of Ottawa's new film policy. This new dispatch describes the immediate action which is being taken to put that policy into action. The article was written at the end of January; hence the references to the late Lord Tweedsmuir.

IN SEPTEMBER Canada did not hurry to formalise a Ministry of Public Information. She preferred to watch and to profit by the mistakes made elsewhere, meanwhile letting the existing media of information carry on with only such censorship regulations as military discretion demanded. As a result she now possesses a Department of Public Information whose pattern may well be a source of envy to others. Instead of the massive British band-wagon—point-blank target for every wit—she has a small, mobile "flying-squad" of men, each experienced in one medium of information (press, radio, films, etc.) and mainly concerned in the direction of policy and the giving of encouragement to the existing service provided by that medium. Co-ordination is falling naturally and spontaneously into the hands of a single adviser who works in close touch with the Prime Minister. This light-weight organisation, shaped more by the course of events than by the dictate of authority, is one which England has long claimed as her own special method of administration; and observers abroad were the more astonished to see so abrupt and strange a departure from it as that represented by the first structure of the Ministry of Information.

In Canada the National Film Board, with the Film Commissioner as executive, acts as the film wing of Public Information service.

The last four weeks have seen the swift initiation by the Board of a war film service which will appeal to many different levels of discussion. They have seen the first of these films hit the screen in theatres from Atlantic to Pacific; they have seen the mobilisation of all available production units to maintain the flow.

On January 12th the first Canadian War Loan was scheduled for public announcement. Shortly before Christmas the Board placed in production a one-reel news story emphasising the importance of the industrial and economic war fronts of Canada, and explaining the loan method of financing them. The Board provided the script and production supervision. The film was made by Associated Screen News in Montreal. Production, which included the shooting of a discussion between Mr Mackenzie King and a group of cabinet ministers, was completed in three weeks. At the time of writing, the film is showing in more than 700 of the 1,100 theatres in the country.

So successful has this War Loan film been in obtaining blanket coverage at theatre level for a Government statement that a series to appear every two months is now planned, each film to give dramatic information on one aspect of Canada at war. The general approach of the series will be that of showing to the people of Canada how their fellow-citizens are getting on in their new-found occupations, and of keeping visual and human contacts alive in spite of the distances created by the war.

The first of the series—a one-reeler on the work of the Navy—is in production, and this will be followed by such items as Canadian women in the war, the work of the Exchange and Supply Boards, and, it is hoped, a news story on the Canadian forces in England. The idea has been enthusiastically received by the trade, and programme space is being reserved for the series. It has been suggested in public discussion that the two-monthly release should as soon as possible become monthly, and that the alternate months might be filled by films of a similar nature from the United Kingdom.

The *March of Time* unit, whose arrival in Canada to produce a big item on this country's war effort was recently announced (see *DNL*, January), has now nearly completed its work. Scheduled for release in February, the film is eagerly awaited in Canada, but the Film Board is perhaps even more interested in the fact that *March of Time* has showing time in 11,000 theatres throughout the world, and that foreign versions in several languages are to be issued.

On the newsreel side proper, the Board has recently appointed a contact-man to work with Associated Screen News and the American reels. His duties will presumably be to watch for war items of immediate interest both to home and overseas audiences, to arrange special facilities and effects for newsreel units, and to develop Canada's place on the world's news screens.

A rumour which has gained strength over the last few days has aroused interested conjecture in connection with the theatre approach to Canadian war information. This rumour has it that Walter Wanger, and possibly other first-line Hollywood creative men, are shortly due in Ottawa. In a recent broadcast the Government Film Commissioner stressed the fact that when he was in Hollywood in September, the younger producers were showing concern at the insistance of the old-timers that war meant "give 'em froth", and were determined that Hollywood should face the issue of this war boldly on the screen without distortion of facts. Mr Grierson has since announced that a Cavalcade of Canada is now due, and that such a film would obviously derive great benefit from the association

with it of the Governor-General (Lord Tweedsmuir, formerly John Buchan). In the light of these statements the possible interest of Wanger in Canada is not without significance.

On the non-theatrical side, a production programme comprising some 17 films is under way. Of these, one group is closely linked with the war information service. The impetus given to Canadian industry by the European conflict has served to focus public attention on the vast natural resources of the country. The time is thus ripe for a discussion on the screen of the use of this natural wealth, both immediately in war, and in the decades to come when Canada will be planning her economy and her social affairs in peace. Each film of the series will deal with a different "front" of natural wealth—the forests, the mines, the wheatlands, the fisheries, etc. Stress will be laid on the change of attitude in recent years from the "mining" of soil and sea in the past to the planned conservation of today, and the need for wider and more co-ordinated planning in the future will be urged. Audiences for these films will be mobilised both among the associations of professionals engaged in the industries concerned, and among all those groups of forward-looking people now coming together in Canada to further the post-war interests of the nation.

SOUR GRAPES?

A NOVEL WHICH made a considerable sensation in the U.S.A. and in this country was John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. It was a best-seller, and its theme was the dispossession of the Oklahoma farming families and their pathetic trek to California—land of broken promise, where they found themselves exploited in the orange groves and starving amid plenty. As a piece of writing the book was widely praised. As a social indictment it naturally raised considerable controversy in the States, where the issues are closely in the public eye; while in this country the situation described tended, of course, to be taken for granted, and the controversial element was accordingly much less of a factor.

When Darryl Zanuck bought the film rights, and allocated John Ford (ace director, and recently famed for *Stage Coach*), the news was received with interest here, and with very mixed feelings in the States. This is in many ways understandable, and it is certainly no business of ours to interfere with what United States citizens may do in regard to a film story which they may consider as doubtful prestige value to their country on the screens of the world. But it is, perhaps, permissible to comment on the principles involved. For some years now documentary people over here have been noting with increasing admiration those trends in American cinema which have not feared to choose subject matter dealing with the major social problems of the United States. In many ways, Hollywood has been, in certain big productions, the screen's major protagonist of democracy; and to most people in Britain the filming of *The Grapes of Wrath* seemed to be a continuation of this policy rather than a new departure.

But following close on the attempt by Associated Farmers (a capital-investment pressure group) to prevent the showing of the film comes an attack by the *Motion Picture Herald* (an influential trade paper), under the initials of Martin Quigley, the Editor-in-Chief. The attack is interesting. The production merits of the film are—not ungenerously—conceded; but, in Quigley's own words, "the mistake is not in the execution for screen purposes of the Steinbeck story. It is in its selection in the first place as material suitable for the screen." In fact, the film is under suspicion as "soap-box propaganda", and the original story is, again according to Quigley, "a chaotic jumble of philosophic and sociological suggestion and argument", although he generously grants that "much of the coarseness, vulgarity, and all the filth and obscenity have been chipped away" by the producers. On another page of the same issue of the *Motion Picture Herald* is a somewhat half-hearted and evasive review.

As yet it is impossible for us to estimate either the box-office or aesthetic values of the film version of *The Grapes of Wrath*, but from the documentary point of view we are bound to consider, with real interest, any movement from influential quarters directed against a trend in Hollywood production which coincides with many democratic ideals. It would indeed appear that one of the major distinctions implied by the Quigley attack is the distinction between a big studio production with world-coverage and a documentary production with limited, if not local, circulation. The latter, because of its comparative lack of pulling power, may be permitted to deal with—to quote Quigley once more—"a stark and drab depiction of a group of incidents in human misery . . . guided by the heavy and designing hand of John Steinbeck"; whereas the former will fall under the criticism that "the entertainment motion picture is no place for social, political, and economic argument". In this country we have from time to time seen evidence of a similar attitude, and we have hitherto (in welcoming films like *They Won't Forget*, *Dust be My Destiny*, *Black Legion*, and *Gabriel over the White House*) looked largely to the United States in fighting an attitude which tends to kowtow to religious or political influence in the choice of screen subjects. Hollywood has shown us that social and economic problems can be box-office, and as regards *The Grapes of Wrath* we have no evidence so far that the world's cinema-goers will reject it as entertainment. On the contrary, latest reports from New York indicate that the première of the film at Broadway's important Rivoli Cinema has proved a record-breaking success. Moreover, a number of New York newspapers have printed reviews of *The Grapes of Wrath* which can only be described as extraordinarily eulogistic. These facts, to say the least of it, suggest that the *Motion Picture Herald* may be a little late on the draw.

It is, as we have already said, no business of ours to interfere with United States film affairs, but we, as a younger branch of a national film industry which is just—in such features as *The Stars Look Down*—groping towards a similar technique, are bound to follow with close and sympathetic interest the efforts of enlightened Hollywood producers to provide what Quigley calls "demagogic preachment" and what we call "democratic discussion" within the limits of the entertainment cinemas of the world.

NEW DOCUMENTARY FILMS

Five British Council Films

Thoroughbred (Pathé Pictures. Editor: A. Curtice).

Swinging the Lambeth Walk (Len Lye on Dufaycolor).

War Comes to London (British Movietonews. Editor: Gerald Sanger).

Britain Shoulders Arms (British Paramount News. Editor: G. T. Cummins).

These Children Are Safe (The Strand Film Company). *Reviewed in detail, in DNL, February.*

By a Publicity Officer

Thoroughbred is a pleasant, county-ish, very pre-war, film about English horses being the best in the world. Its camerawork is excellent. Its story is intelligently told. It has everything: pearlies' ponies in Regent's Park for the Van Horse Parade; shire horses on the stud farm; ploughing matches over once-idle acres; trouble at Tattenham Corner; four-in-hands on the Windsor road; and my special friends, the brewers' handsome drayhorses.

Swinging the Lambeth Walk, though a long way ahead of most of us, is pre-war, too. This is one of Mr Len Lye's screen experiments in setting colour to music. I have poor eyes. In giving me a headache this film may have robbed me of objectivity. I allow its technical interest: I don't see its cultural value at this moment.

War Comes to London shows what happened when crisis reached climax; headlines getting bigger, faces getting longer, photographers doffing caps to Cabinet Ministers in Downing Street (always a bad sign), caterpillars of evacuee children threading their way to stations, gas-masks being lost, sandbags being filled. . . .

Despite skilful editing, the film is a bit jerky: in the manner of a collection of newsreel shots. That is forgivable. The fault of *War Comes to London* is that the story of the quickening of a nation's pulse is told without the speeding up of the film's own tempo.

The film has one terrific moment: when, fifteen minutes after the tired voice of Mr Chamberlain has told waiting millions that they are at war, the sirens wail for the first time and London takes cover. In on-the-spot reporting like this, film has everything else in the guard's van.

War Comes to London ends with columns of marching soldiers; *Britain Shoulders Arms* begins with them. But *these* soldiers are marching not to battle stations but from railway stations: marching home, weary of war, in 1918.

Thereafter this nation laid down its arms and worked for peace, its most militant show the Aldershot Tattoo, its pacifism so passionate that when war loomed near military service had to be made compulsory. You know the theme—and you can't do much now about the parts you don't like.

Paramount have taken on the difficult job of showing what happened before the lion took wings: when the lion wanted only to laze in the sun; willing even to share the sun (so long as it had the biggest share); but not, it finally appears, willing to be pushed into the shade. The film manages to show the lion, its tail tied up in any number of knots, stirring. And, stirring from the comatose, the animal is not uninteresting.

There are brilliant shots of the Aldershot Tattoo by floodlight; close-ups of the army mechanising; pictures of Britain swinging into action. And a crisp commentary manages to avoid jingoism. "We've got the men . . ." etc., is discovered to be just as effective *pianissimo*.

These Children Are Safe, a little over-sentimentalised by Professor Hilton's commentary, is the best rounded film of the lot (which makes it odd that it should need to be cut to one reel before going abroad).

Nevertheless these last three films *do* present a Britain with something to say for itself, and most of it worth saying.

War Songs of China. *Distribution:* Progressive Film Institute. 1 reel.

THE SONGS are sung first by a soloist, illustrated by the words, pointed by our old friend the dancing ball, and then by a chorus, illustrated either by natural scenes or, in one case, by cartoon. The cartoon is remarkable, in that it is cut closely to the words and in draughtsmanship and technique has an authentically Chinese quality. Quite apart from the musical interest, the cartoon sequence makes the film well worth seeing.

The 400 Million. *Production:* History Today, Inc. *Direction:* Ivens and Ferno. *Editing:* Helen Van Dongen. *Music:* Hans Eisler. *Commentary:* Dudley Nichols. *Speaker:* Frederic March. 5 reels.

JORIS IVENS AND JOHN FERNO have made a great film. They have covered a war which is being fought on a dozen, ill-defined fronts: they have suggested some of the history that went to the making of the war and they have sketched in some of its wider implications. Finally they have told their story in one hour of moving, lucid and beautifully photographed film. They could have made it the easy way. A few shots of babies' shattered bodies, some well-chosen, noble faces, the enemy advancing across the fields and some frightened refugees, and yet another war would have been "put across". But the makers chose the more difficult method. The film was obviously carefully and comprehensively shot and although perhaps it appears to have been shaped in the cutting room rather than on paper, it has a definite form. And it is a form which seems particularly appropriate to such a vast and straggling battle. Like the campaign itself the film organises the disorganised, now following a thread out from Chiang Kai-Chek's headquarters to the borders of Manchuria, then returning to the centre and working out again to the East. But all the time it is showing the tenacity of purpose of a great nation fighting for its freedom and the rapid building up of a new and determined spirit.

There is no false emotionalism. The pictures have been left to speak for themselves and in allowing this the makers have chosen well. The wise and lovely face of Madame Sun Yat Sen, the young and fervent political speakers in the towns, and the indomitable spirit which is implicit in every movement of the Chinese soldiers speak for freedom and the spirit of China in a way that no commentator or cleverly contrived sound track could ever achieve.

This film brings a war to life. The newsreels have given us the bombing of the big cities. Now we are taken into the towns and villages. On to the plains where the stone gods sit; into the fields where the reaper drops his sickle at the hurried call and takes up his rifle from its hiding-place in the straw; into the shattered village where the housewife hunts for the grinding stone among the debris of her shattered home. This is the picture of a country at war. It is no longer the land of the willow pattern plate or of the Good Earth; there is a new will and a new purpose in China today. China is being reborn and it is the great virtue of the 400 *Million* that this feeling of regeneration is conveyed in every foot.

Crisis in the Pacific. *March of Time No.* 10, Fifth Year. *Distribution:* R.K.O. Radio Pictures. *Running time:* 18 minutes.

ONE OF THE handicaps under which *March of Time* labours is that most people find it hard to dislike any of its items. The reel has so polished and refined its own formula that the critical faculties of the audience are disarmed by the speed and courageous assurance with which the commentator whisks them from one idea to the next. As they get their breath at the end of the film, they are conscious of a glow of self-satisfaction at having joined in the pursuit of so much information. The audience is rarely left in a mood to reconsider at leisure the crowd of facts which have been presented. The persisting impression too often is that they have seen a *March of Time* which was very good, rather than that they have seen a fact film on a subject of major importance: the style makes more impression than the subject matter.

March of Time's latest release begins with an analysis of the strategy of the war in Europe, then moves on to the more terrible war still raging in China; from China it leaps to Tokio to warn us that Europe's preoccupations are there regarded as favourable to a year of wider Japanese conquest in 1940. From Tokio we proceed to Hongkong to be reminded that Britain's China Squadron can now look for few reinforcements from home. From Hongkong the story takes us to the United States, which *March of Time* says is the one nation whose support of Britain in the Pacific may act as a check on Japan's militarists. But, we learn, the United States has been supplying Japan with a large proportion of the raw materials of conquest. Moreover, for fear of offending Japan, Congress has rejected a bill for the militarisation of America's island of Guam, the complete fortification of which is regarded by the U.S. Navy as essential to American power in the Pacific. So the film settles down at last in Guam for its principal sequences. We gather that in spite of Congress the U.S. Navy will somehow manage to fortify the

island and we are shown a little of its present way of life under a naval dictatorship. Previously we have broken our twenty minutes' journey across the world to consider Philippine independence, which is relevant to the story. In conclusion we are told that all the facts add up to prove America's determination to keep war out of the Western hemisphere.

This lightning survey is tough going. American audiences will doubtless find the problems more familiar than they are in Europe, but even when the principle is accepted of telling more than can be assimilated rather than less, there still remains a limit beyond which the description of international affairs may drive the man-in-the-street to give up in despair before the complexities and contradictions. The solution would seem to be to tell more of the story by picture and less by commentary. Less ground will be covered more slowly, but it will be covered more surely. The atmosphere and mood of a country and the character and problems of its people are communicated with better and more permanent effect by picture and dialogue than by an abstract voice. We need not look beyond *March of Time* for the proof of it. Can we please have more items like "Uncle Sam—Farmer"?

P.F.B. (Petroleum Films Bureau) Cinemagazines. *Production:* Elton and Baylis. *Distribution:* Non-theatrical, available on 35 mm. and 16 mm. *Average running time:* 7 to 10 mins.

THIS SERIES of one-reelers, of which Number 4 is just released, represents an important innovation in industrial public relations on an international scale. An issue normally contains three separate items each dealing with the function of some single cog in the complex machine of modern life. Number Three contains a description of the operation of the airport on Lake Kisumu, and a beautifully photographed description of the *Mauretania* leaving dock for her trials. Finally it shows Mr Teddam making a cartwheel while he comments on his ancient craft with the assurance of Sacha Guitry and the native simplicity of Walt Whitman; a miniature masterpiece of photography and editing by Peter Baylis. Number Four shows how the Australian Bush is cleared, the use of "Propagas" for welding, and the moving of a railway bridge overnight between trains. The references to the widespread use of oil and oil products are always implicit and never underlined. Usually one of the three items in each release contains no oil reference whatsoever. The films provide an essential contrast in a non-theatrical programme of weightier propaganda and help to create the best background for all good public relations by industry—a perspective of the inter-relationship of the modern world of industry and commerce.

Technically the P.F.B. Cinemagazines are unsurpassed in any field. Jobs are never dissociated from the people who do them, and realism is achieved by ingenious adaptation of photographic style to subject matter and a first rate use of sound. Commentary is used sparingly, and never distracts one's attention from the screen image. Foreign versions are available overseas in French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch; other languages will probably follow.

STORY FILM OF THE MONTH

THE STARS LOOK DOWN

By a Film Critic

WHEN MAX SHACH bought Dr Cronin's *Stars Look Down* some years back, he announced that Karl Grune (publicised as the director of *Kameradschaft*, by the way), would direct. Our hearts sank. They were raised again last year when the rights were transferred and Carol Reed slated as director. During production we learnt that the model-makers were closely studying the fine studio-work of Metzner's pit interiors in *Kameradschaft*. Perhaps it was this gossip which first suggested that the film would be mainly about a mine disaster.

When a film departs from the novel from which it is taken, usually it is to the good. But *The Stars Look Down* film not only departs from but ignores wholly this book's theme. The book had three parts: except for the love story, the film uses only the first. This is merely the bare setting of the stage for a drama that the film never reaches. You may not like Dr Cronin's work, but you cannot ignore his theme of conflict between vested interests and common labour. The important passages of the book (excluding the pit disaster) were the mine-owner's hearing of his son before the conscientious-objector's tribunal, the burning of the Neptune pit despite Arthur Barrass' progressive attempts to improve conditions, the "Tynecastle" election which sent Fenwick to Westminster, his realisation that a lone M.P. can do nothing without his party's support and assent, the betrayal of the miners' interests by the Labour Government, and the second election when Joe, the profiteer, beats Fenwick to it. None of these is in the film. Nor does it try to span the passage of time—pre-war, war, and post-war, so essential to the story. Fenwick in the book ends by going back to the pit realising the subtlety with which members of His Majesty's Opposition have their teeth drawn; Fenwick in the film ends by starting out into the world to put wrong right: he just catches the 10.15 "up" train to nowhere in particular—an idealist, a crank, a daffy without even the equipment with which Mr Smith went to Washington.

Therein lies the impotence of this film. Not only does it imply—not state, note—*imply* that Unionism is a negative, often harmful, thing, but it makes the hero prompted by motives which are those of an "intellectual" dreamer, a man born out of his class. (Remember a similar treatment of the young Socialist in the *South Riding* film; a cough-wracked consumptive, therefore forgiven his "odd" views.) There is no effort to develop Fenwick's character. Young Barrass appears scarcely at all. Nor, to anyone familiar with the Northumberland coal fields, does the film get anywhere near the real people. Apart from the brilliance of Emlyn Williams's Joe (not a typical working class character, note) these people are people of the studios. We see nothing of authentic "Tynecastle" life, so well described by Cronin. Reference again to the book reveals that seldom has there been such a guide for detail to a director. Most of it is ignored. Maybe this failure to get to grips with the thing is summarised by the fact that the only authentic shots of coal-mining—except for a few pithead scenes—are stock material bought, we suggest, from Jack Holmes's G.B.I. film *The Mine*.

We would have liked to welcome this as the great film its distributors claim, and to have seen it as the big job which one day Carol Reed will do.

So let's be fair. He has directed a well-made film centred round a colliery village in the Newcastle field, a film in which he has honestly tried to portray mining life. He has a first-class opening sequence, a good scene when young Fenwick pleads for the nationalisation of the coal industry . . . and a terrifying flood disaster in the mine. He has, a rare virtue in British films, the support of some excellent small-part playing. The sets are mostly admirable and the photography of high quality. But he has no more than this; except our thanks that the film was made at all.

By a Coal Owner

I HAVE NOT read the novel of *The Stars Look Down*, but I hope, for Dr Cronin's sake, it is more convincing than the film. For this is a film that lacks almost completely any feeling of reality. There is some clever direction, and some interesting camera angles, but the whole thing is studio from beginning to end.

The scenes at the mine itself, and the disaster of the flooding of Scupperhole, inevitably recall *Kameradschaft*. And how weak this film looks in comparison. The emotional tension in *Kameradschaft* was almost unbearable and the horror wholly convincing; how vividly I remember the old grandfather watching over his grandson, the frightened eyes of the pit ponies, the frantic tapping on the pipes. But the entombed scenes in *The Stars Look Down* have in them nothing memorable: the young lad, the religious fanatic, the footballer—they all just missed being real people.

The coal-owner in the film is an astonishing travesty—a ridiculous figure straight from melodrama. He stalks about the pit with a sneer on his face, pretends for some odd reason that he has lost the plans of the old workings, and seems to be passionately anxious to have his mine flooded. What is the point of all this? If the film is supposed to be propaganda against the owners, this utterly unreal figure is not going to help. The whole business of the lost plans baffled me; and I never understood why the owner appeared at the last minute with the plans and promptly lost both them and his own life.

The best thing in the film is the acting of Emlyn Williams; he runs away with every scene in which he appears. The domestic affairs of Mr Redgrave and Miss Lockwood occupied far too much of the film and I found them tedious.

By a Durham coal miner

THIS FILM of the life of the mining community, in its general setting, is an example of that which can be witnessed in many parts of the British coal field; in its particular it shows the danger to

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which the miner is subject at his work; how the determined ambition of one to equip himself to work in the interest of fellow-men is in the particular instance frustrated by contact and association with the "non-mining" world, with consequent delay in doing effective work owing to attempting to meet the desires and social ideas of a "non-mining" wife and the earnest desire of a miner husband whose heart is devoted to the cause of his fellow-miners.

The film gives abundant evidence of the ready and strong sense of unionism among the miners but it over-emphasises the influence of unofficial unionism. The portrayed indifference of the official union representatives is incredible because just as Mr Fenwick had acquired, from experience, knowledge and zeal that the workings of the pit should be worked with due regard to plans of previous workings, so miners' union representatives are men of zeal and ability acquired from similar experience. Nevertheless, the cause of the mining disaster emphasises the importance of all parties concerned with the workings of the pit paying very close regard to the plan of the workings as a whole.

The mining disaster and the accompanying scenes of the workings in the pit are very good; so realistic that nobody could fail to be gripped with horror that fellow-citizens are regularly in danger of such tragedy. These scenes will be particularly understood by the mining community and the human tragedy attending such scenes will be fully appreciated by all classes after having seen this film.

All who have knowledge and experience of mining life in all its aspects will appreciate and enjoy this successful result of film production. Allowing for inconsistencies with actual practice, such as the union's indifference and disregard for the dispute, and the suggestion that a miner, having become a schoolteacher by profession, as such is appointed a miners' union official, the film is so far the most complete attempt to cover mining life in all its aspects, individual, family and village: in the home, in the pit and in association as fellow-workers. One thing which will be appreciated in the story of this film is that it is free from any suggestion that the mining community is any less moral than any other class in society. *The Stars Look Down* is as yet the most successful attempt to present to the public the lot of our mining folk and will undoubtedly assist understanding and appreciation of the human and material difficulties which have confronted and do confront the miner in order that the nation shall have coal.

Next Month

THE INSIDE STORY OF U.F.A. EDUCATIONAL FILMS UNDER THE NAZI REGIME

FILM OF THE MONTH FOR CHILDREN

THE WIZARD OF OZ

By an Educationist

THIS IS A fairy tale and it has an "A" certificate. This means that unless local authorities do something about it, children may only see this film if they go in the company of an adult. We presume that a "U" certificate has been withheld because there are frightening sequences in the film. And this is true. Children (and adults) are quite likely to be scared by the witch and all her paraphernalia of magic. They are likely to be scared more than when they see the footprints in the sand over Robinson Crusoe's shoulder, but considerably less than when they get in the barrel with Jim Hawkins or hear Old Pew come tapping up the road. But that is literature, and maybe films are different. I believe they are, and the witch in the *Wizard* is the realest witch I have ever seen. Parents must therefore judge (or guess) for themselves. For us, if we had to arrange a children's matinee we would agitate until the local authority gave permission for the *Wizard* to be shown or we would rally sufficient teachers to provide the "A" quota. For the *Wizard of Oz* is the best fairy tale we have seen, and if children still like fairy tales they will like this.

Baum's story is not well known in Britain, but in the United States it enjoys with children the reputation which *Alice in Wonderland* has in this country. It is the magic story of how Dorothy (Judy Garland) is lifted by a cyclone out of her Kansas home and dropped down in the land of Oz, which is Fairyland, or Dreamland, or, if you like, Technicolorland. She meets the Scarecrow (Ray Bolger) who wants a brain, the Tin Man (Jack Haley) who wants a heart, and the Lion (Bert Lahr) who wants courage. Dorothy just wants to go home. So off they go to see the Wizard, to see what he can do for them. The journey takes them through the many adventures you would expect and some you would not. They fall foul of a witch, journey dreadfully through an enchanted wood, are helped by goblins, and are attacked by flying monkeys. The Bad Witch keeps weaving spells and the Good Fairy keeps moving the amendments. Eventually, after some of the most terrifying adventures and some of the most delightful episodes, everything turns out all right, and Dorothy gets back to Kansas. She promises never to leave home again, which seems silly because it is obviously much more fun being with a Tin Man and a Lion and a Scarecrow in Technicolor than it is being in Kansas in sepia.

"For children of all ages" is easily said, but even if you are too sophisticated to be either entranced or scared by the subject matter (which means that you are probably 16 past) there is enough technical magic to make you sit up. The cyclone sequence can look most screen storms straight in the face, and outface most of them. Some sound engineer had the time of his life. The Technicolor is in a class by itself. Accurate colour does not come into the argument, for starting from the coloured pages of children's books it has already left reality behind before it steps into the Land of Oz. And once in the Land of Oz who cares about reality? The result is that the highways are custard yellow and castles lime-drop green. One can only gasp, and salute the Art Director. The music too is good: unobtrusive in the main but with one important whistleable tune.

Nearly everyone is going to compare it with *Snow White* so why not us? Snow White was beautiful but unreal, and the human characters were very unreal. *The Wizard of Oz* is real. The human characters are real and beautiful: and the immortals, while rich in their immortality, are real too. Maybe that is why the Censor held out on it.

By a Schoolboy aged 12 (*Raynes Park County School*)

I THINK THE *Wizard of Oz* is a good film with a true Motto behind it. The little girl who was knocked unconscious by a whirlwind while returning from running away from home had a dream in which she landed in Munchkin Land.

I loved the funny little inhabitants of this and especially the three little "toughs" and the Mayor. He wore a three-cornered hat, and a green waistcoat ornamented with a very large watch.

She met three very queer people on her way to Oz, who had faces like farmhands that she knew. A good witch whom she met told her that she must go to Oz if she wanted to go back to the earth, and gave her a pair of ruby slippers to protect her from the wicked witch. The scenery while she is going to Oz is very realistic for a hot summer's day, with the road winding away into the distance and the flowers waving in the breeze.

It is funny to see them all shiver and shake in the presence of the Wizard, whose face appeared on a screen accompanied by flashes of flame. I think it is rather sad that the Wizard turned out to be a man working levers and knobs, but nevertheless fulfilled his promise to the three friends of the little girl, but by a fluke could not to her. When the good witch tells her to repeat "There's no place like home", she wakes up and finds herself in her bed muttering it.

In all, a very good film with lovely scenery all through, and fine acting by Judy Garland as the little girl. With some frightening scenes by the wicked witch, mixed with some funny parts by the little girl's friends, the tin man, the straw man, and the non-courageous lion.

An excellent film with a motto: "There's No Place like Home". Which I have often heard my father say while on leave.

(*"The Wizard of Oz" is an M.G.M. picture, directed by Victor Fleming.*)

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

MONTHLY THREEPENCE

NUMBER 3 MARCH 1940

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER is issued only to private subscribers and continues the policy and purpose of **World Film News** by expressing the documentary idea towards everyday living.

DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER is produced under the auspices of **Film Centre, London,** in association with **American Film Center, New York.**

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FILMS FOR PRIMITIVE PEOPLES

A NEW TECHNIQUE

Acknowledgments are due to Mr W. Sellers, and to the Editor of the Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, for permission to reprint the extracts from the commentary to *Machi Gaba* included in this article.

LARGE AREAS of our Colonial Empire are inhabited by illiterate, semi-literate, or otherwise backward populations. The problem of education—in its widest sense—has been looming larger and larger in past years, and steps have been taken both by Whitehall and by local administrations to get rid of financial and technical difficulties in this important field. The use of films can of course be only a part of any educational scheme, but it is clear that in many colonies, and particularly in Africa, it can play a much larger part than might originally have been expected. In the vast areas covered by Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda in the East, and Nigeria and the Gold Coast in the West, the first urgency is for simple instruction and propaganda as regards more hygienic living conditions and the prevention of disease. Next comes the need for general (elementary) education and the improvement of agricultural methods (for nearly the entire population lives by the soil). Finally, it is necessary to broaden their knowledge of the world around them and of their place in it, if the avowed British policy of advancing all Crown Colonies to a self-governing status is to become anything more than a hollow catchword.

Results To Date

Already experiments have revealed the practical value of films. Notcutt and Latham in East Africa carried out their Bantu Education scheme, whose interesting results were formulated in their book *The African and the Cinema*. And in Nigeria the work of Sellers, under an enlightened Health Department, has proved over a period of years that films, properly planned and used, are in the first line as adjuncts to all campaigns in health instruction, let alone more general educational schemes. These and other experiments have proved clearly that films for natives must be regarded as a highly specialised subject. Many technical tricks which are the commonplace of English educationals and documentaries must be jettisoned, and much simpler systems must be substituted. This means that existing English educational films are of little use except for more advanced natives, who usually represent a very small proportion of the population. For the great majority, special films must be made.

Production Methods

In Nigeria, Sellers has formulated certain essential rules which must be followed in making films for primitive populations:

1. The general tempo must be slow, and the length of individual scenes must be twice or three times as long as is usually considered necessary for English school audiences.

2. The content of any given scene must be very simple in its composition, because natives view all objects on the screen with equal interest, unless the important object is clearly emphasised. Close and mid shots are therefore preferable to long shots.

3. Strict accuracy is vital in portraying native habits and customs. Mistakes at once turn a serious film into a comedy.

4. No camera tricks of any sort. Continuity must be clearly maintained in all changes of scene, even if it means using three shots where one would normally do for audiences more used to film technique.

5. Films must be made as silents. A master commentary is then written, and is added by a native commentator, or by disc records, through a microphone during each performance. This system is vital, owing to the great variation in local dialects.

Distribution

The distribution of the films must perforce be by travelling vans. When a van arrives at a village the show is announced through the loudspeaker, and (in Nigeria at least) an audience of anything from 2,000 to 15,000 can be rapidly collected. Before the film is shown, its story is first explained in simple terms through the microphone. After it is over, a short talk follows, punching home the main message of the film. During the actual showing, one of the commentator's jobs is to get the audience to shout answers to questions about what is happening on the screen. Here is a sample. It is part of the commentary to *Machi Gaba*, a cleanliness film produced by Sellers in Northern Nigeria:—

Commentator: "Here is a very dirty house. Who is that man? He is a farmer, but he is not walking very quickly, and he does not work very quickly. There is something the matter with him. What is the matter with him?"

Audience: "He is sick."

Commentator: "Yes. Sick people cannot work properly. That man's sickness, it is more than likely, is caused by all this filth and dirt that you see lying about his house, and a great deal of the sickness in the town is caused by the filth and dirt that the people allow to lie about all over the town. We do not blame the people; they have never been told properly that dirt brings sickness. Here is a very dirty house. They are foolish people who live in that house. The man is a weaver, but he is not working very quickly; in fact, now he is leaving his work altogether. Oh, poor man! If he lived in a clean house, it is more than likely that he would be

healthy. Yes, poor man, you had better lie down until you are better. No more work until you are better; sick people cannot work. People who live in dirty houses are often sick. Make yourself comfortable, poor man; you will be there for some time. I should lie down if I were you. Are you sorry for this man?"

Audience: "No! We are not sorry for him!"

Commentator: "Why are you not sorry for him?"

Audience: "Because he is a dirty man and lives in a dirty house."

Commentator: "Now the cause of that weaver's sickness may be these old and useless water pots and calabashes which have been left lying about. They hold water, and mosquitoes breed in that water, and mosquitoes bring sickness . . . (etc.)"

A Centralised Plan

There appears to be little doubt that such methods, modified or altered as required for different areas, could form a reliable basis for a native cinema operating widely throughout the Colonial Empire. A central organisation in London would be needed, preferably under the direct control of the Colonial Office. This central body would co-ordinate the work of all colonial film-departments, facilitate the interchange of films and ideas, and advise on technical and educational methods. At first two types of film would be produced. Films like *Machi Gaba* would be produced on the spot by men who had previously received technical training in Britain. But films about Britain would be produced over here by men seconded from the colonies, who alone would be capable of making them correctly. This last point is vital. The simplest films about English life will be outside the native's comprehension unless they are carefully and closely related to his own limited experience. Experimental films of this type are, it is understood, already being made, and when completed should be a valuable guide to the validity of this method of creating a closer sympathy and understanding between colonial populations and ourselves.

Economics

Such film schemes have a special merit—that of economy. Only a moderate capital investment would be needed for 16 mm. apparatus, disc-recorders, and a sufficient number of travelling cinemas. The annual production and distribution cost would be comparatively small, for the scheme calls for no full-size film or apparatus, and disc-recording is cheap and easy. It is to be hoped that because of—rather than in spite of—the war, steps will be taken to put some such scheme into operation. It would accord well with the increasingly enlightened attitude which has in recent years been so marked a feature of the Colonial Office.

NEWS FROM CANADA

The National Film Society of Canada has joined the Association of School Film Libraries (U.S.A.) as its official affiliate in Canada, and as a result the Association is expanding itself into an international organisation and extending its activities into wider fields. The National Film Society of Canada is similar to the Association in that it is a non-profit organisation with a membership of educational institutions co-operating to promote the educational and cultural uses of motion pictures. It receives financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation and enjoys the active endorsement of the Canadian Government. Four branches of the Film Society's film library are now in operation in Vancouver, Edmonton, Saskatoon and Toronto. These libraries supply educational films to schools, universities and study groups at a nominal cost. They are not established for the purposes of supplying the full needs of their districts but rather to encourage educational authorities to acquire libraries of their own. These units contain examples of both American and British films used for classroom and general educational purposes. Pursuing its policy of promoting better international relations through the use of the film, the National Film Society is arranging for a national distribution of the publicity and good-will films of foreign countries through the same service.

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DOCUMENTARY IN THE UNITED STATES

The Association of Documentary Film Producers, which was organised several months ago, made its first public appearance when it staged a Documentary Film Festival at the New York World's Fair during the week of October 9th to 15th. The celebration was built around a series of daily two-hour integrated film programmes in the Little Theatre in the Science and Education Building. It marked the climax of a summer of showings of such films in the Little Theatre under the sponsorship of the producers association, and, so far as New York and her World's Fair are concerned, the official "arrival" of the documentary film movement in the U.S.

Highlights of the week were the showings of four films which rarely reach a public screen: *Easter Island*, two reels made by John Ferno in 1937 for the Belgian Government on the mysterious monoliths of the island by this name; *Wedding of Palo*, two reels by Knud Rasmussen in 1937 on life among the Eskimos; *The Earth is Song*, ten reels on life in the Slovak mountains before the German invasion, produced by Karol Plicka and directed by Ladislav Kolda; and *Houses of Misery*, three reels on slums and re-housing in Belgium, produced in 1938 for the Belgian Government; directed by Henri Storck and photographed by John Ferno.

Other films (with producers in parentheses) shown were, under Travel and Exploration: *Moana* (Robert Flaherty), *Dark Rapture* (Armand Denis), and *Five Faces of Malaya* (Alex Shaw); under Workers and Jobs: *Shipyard* (Paul Rotha), *Borinage* (Joris Ivens), *The Wave* (Paul Strand), *People of the Cumberland* (Frontier Films), and *North Sea* (Alberto Cavalcanti); under Instructional: *The Filter* (Mary Field), *Seahorse* (Jean Painleve), *Monkey into Man* (Stanley Hawes), *Highlights and Shadows* (Eastman Kodak), *Getting Your Money's Worth* (Rothman, Kandal, Delzucca and Jays), *Underground Farmers* (Stacey and Horace Woodard), and *Heart Disease* (March of Time); under Government sponsored films: *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (Pare Lorentz), *Coal Mining in the Soviet Union* (Mabylitsky), and *Men of the Alps* (Alberto Cavalcanti); under Social Problems: *War and Propaganda* (March of Time), *Return to Life* (Henri Cartier), *Crisis* (Herbert Kline and Hanns Burger), and *The* 400,000,000 (Joris Ivens and John Ferno); under Public Relations: *Smoke Menace* (John Taylor), *Men Make Steel* (Jam Handy), *Phillips Radio* (Joris Ivens), *Song of Ceylon* (Basil Wright), and *Housing Problems* (John Taylor, Arthur Elton and Edgar Anstey).

Eight Classroom Films on the Eastman Kodak Company's productions programme are scheduled for early release. Two of these, for use with girls at the senior high-school level, are classed under the general subject of *Child Care*. *Bathing the Infant* demonstrates the various types of equipment used, as well as correct methods of handling the baby during bathing. *Feeding the Infant* is a detailed pictorisation of the routine of feeding both the breast-fed and the bottle-fed baby. Three of the films constitute a new *Safety Series*. Of these, *Safety at Play* and *Safety at Home* are for children in the first three grades. *Vacation Safety* is for grades four to six, and for junior high schools. It covers swimming precautions in an organised camp, boating, camp safety and fire building. *Vitamin B1*, first of a new food series, is for high-school use. It points out sources of the antineuritic vitamin, effects of deficiency, and the need for a balanced diet. Two other health films complete the group. *The Eyes* (*Advanced*) aids high-school instruction on the structure, physiology, and hygiene of the eye. *The Eyes* (*Primary*) is a simplified version for use in elementary grades.

Film Audiences for Democracy, 342 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y., has arranged a "Series of Film Forums" with discussion guides, according to its Director of Activities, Edward Kern. Subjects covered in the series include *This is America*, *Health in a Democracy*, *Housing*, *Child Criminality*, *Why WPA?*, *Racial Persecution and Social Injustice*, *The Role of Women*, *Why Organise?*, *Why Consumer Education?*, *What the Government Does With Our Money*, *Education in a Democracy*, *Who are These Orientals?*, *What is the Value of Co-operatives?*, and *The Negro*. Films to cover these subjects have been selected from varied sources and a rental arrangement established.

Two weekly film series, one for adults and one for children, are being presented this fall and winter by the Education Division of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The showings, which are given on Saturdays and Sundays, are announced as covering "milestones in the development of the documentary film, ranging from newsreels, *March of Time* subjects and short human interest subjects, to travel, semi-fictional and advertising films". The programme, which the Association of School Film Libraries is being of some assistance in getting together, will include *The Private Life of the Gannets*, *Night Mail*, *Moana*, *Nanook of the North*, *North Sea*, *The River*, *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, *The* 400,000,000, *The Wave*, and the *Wedding of Palo*.

The Department of Psychology of Columbia University has announced a series of instructional films in psychology, which, according to the University, "have been rated by producers of educational films as technically excellent". Requests for detailed information, or orders for prints of the pictures, should be sent to C. J. Warden, Department of Psychology, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. There are five films in the series. They are in silent versions only and prints can only be purchased, not rented. The five films with their 16 mm. footages and prices are:

Development and Behaviour of the White Rat, 350 feet—$25.
Problem Solving in Monkeys, 420 feet—$30.
The Experimental Psychology of Vision, 450 feet—$30.
Color Vision, 150 feet (in colour)—$22.
Testing Animal Intelligence, 450 feet—$30.

BRITISH DOCUMENTARY ACTIVITY

Stanley Hawes has now left for Canada to join Stuart Legg in production activities on behalf of the National Film Board. Hawes has been responsible for the direction of (among other documentaries) *Speed the Plough*, *Here is the Land* and *Monkey into Man*. His presence in Canada will be a great help in the new and vigorous production policy initiated by Grierson and Legg.

A number of potentially important subjects are in production which should do much to keep the documentary units busy. **Strand Films** have been asked to make three films about the British people being kept fit by sport; the achievements of Britain in the spheres of engineering, science and the social services; and London transport. Alexander Shaw is generally in charge of production. At **Film Centre,** Basil Wright will be responsible for a film about canals in wartime, while Arthur Elton is looking after a British railways picture and a Bren gun film designed for public audiences (Production firms not yet allocated). Mary Field, at **G.B. Instructional,** has a film to make about the Civilian Front. Other films, we understand, are being discussed, details of which will be available shortly.

From the **G.P.O. Film Unit** comes news of general activity. Watt's balloon barrage film, taken up at the Firth of Forth, has been titled *Squadron* 992 and awaits release. Production has begun on a film about Agriculture and research script work on a British Merchant Navy picture is in hand. Editing of both French and English versions of a film on Munitions is proceeding.

Work at **Film Centre** on the research for the four films being scripted in collaboration with P.E.P. progresses well. Contact has been made with other bodies and individuals investigating the field. At **G.B. Instructional,** Donald Carter continues his series of reels for the War Office and a new coloured series of *Secrets of Life* is being planned by Oliver Pike, Percy Smith and Durden. Convoys seem a popular location these days. **Publicity Films** are the latest to have two units on the high seas shooting material for a food-rationing film for Cadbury's.

At the **Shell Film Unit,** Peter Baylis is making *First Principles of Refining* and *Cinemagazine* No. 5, while Grahame Tharp directs a film about Air Screws, both under Elton's supervision. **Realist Film Unit's** film for the British Council has been named *Island People* and is ready for screening, followed by *The Times* film, now called *The Fourth Estate*, in March. J. D. Davidson has completed his technical film for the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. *March of Time* unit is still in France with the B.E.F.

British Foundation Pictures, Spectator Films, and **Science Films** all report current activity for official and other bodies, with particulars to follow.

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FILM SOCIETY NEWS

LONDON. **The London Scientific Film Society** gave its second performance on February 18th. Among other subjects, films on lubrication, telephony, crystals and various agricultural subjects were shown. From now on the subscription for the rest of the season has been halved. Meantime, to the obvious pleasure of a crowded audience, the **London Film Institute Film Society** opened up again with a bumper programme, including a new Len Lye and Ivens' long-awaited Chinese epic, 400 *Million*. (Reviews of these are on pages 6 and 7.) The secretary, Miss Olwen Vaughan, is arranging further shows, and particulars can be obtained from her at 4 Great Russell Street, W.C.1. It now only remains for the Film Society itself—that doyen of us all—to start up again, and London Sunday afternoons will be back to their peace-time splendour.

THE PROVINCES. From all quarters come reports of increasing activity, of which one of the most striking is from the **Ayrshire Film Society.** Writes the secretary:—

"We started the season with a membership reduced from 500 to slightly under 300, and changed our meeting-time from the evening to the afternoon. During the second half-season we decided to form a branch of the Society in North Ayrshire, and are now running meetings on Sunday evenings at the Broadway, Prestwick, and in the afternoons at the Regal, Saltcoats. The membership at Saltcoats is so far small, but it is hoped that this will be increased to 100 by the end of the season. Although the Saltcoats venture was probably a risk at a time like the present, my Council felt that it was the duty of all organisations of a cultural nature to endeavour rather to increase the Society's scope in war-time, despite the difficulties, than to close down until better days."

Films shown have included *Mort du Cygne*, *The Thirteen*, *If I Had a Million*, *The Londoners*, and *The City*.

Dundee and St Andrews report a record season in spite of the cancellation of the afternoon shows at St Andrews due to the action of the local magistrates (see *DNL*, January). Membership has been so large that the afternoon shows have been transferred to Dundee itself, in addition to the regular evening performances. Moreover, the number of shows has been increased from six to nine. Features so far shown include *Les Disparus de St Agil*, *Mayerling*, and *Hostages* (this the most popular, says the secretary). Dundee is yet another proof that enterprising societies may reap greater rather than less prosperity in war-time, despite transport and black-out difficulties.

Lochaber (see also *DNL*, February) has recently shown Ruby Grierson's *Zoo and You* and Duvivier's *La Bandera*. Part of the programme note on the latter may be of interest to other societies:—

"Two warnings are perhaps necessary. One for the admirers of Annabella, and the other for the anything-but-admirers of General Franco. Annabella is almost unrecognisable in a not too happy part. As for General Franco, the film is dedicated to him as the then Commander of the Spanish Foreign Legion, but as it was made before he emerged from this comparative obscurity the dedication has no political significance."

Bryanston is well known as the public school which is run on a unique and highly successful development of the Dalton Plan. Here, on alternate Sunday afternoons, the boys can attend complete film performances. The programmes are well planned and very catholic in their choice, for they include the *March of Time*, documentaries like *Night Mail* and the *Nutrition Film*, cartoons, nature films, and features which range from foreign successes to films like Hitchcock's *Young and Innocent* or Jack Hulbert's *The Camels are Coming*. An admission charge keeps the performances on a paying basis. This school film society should be an encouragement to all secretaries, for they can look forward to a new generation of members who have learnt both how to enjoy good films and how to exercise their critical faculties. It would be interesting to know how many other schools run film societies on a similar scale.

For its sixth performance of the season the **Edinburgh Film Guild** showed the *March of Time's "History of the Movies"* and the Soviet film comedy *The Rich Bride*.

The **Oban Film Society** is another Scottish body which has courageously decided to carry on, and the first of its four performances of the season was held on February 16th.

Turning to Northern Ireland we find that the **Belfast Film Institute Film Society,** unable to get a cinema, has started repertory shows in the Grosvenor Hall. Despite a frank warning from the secretary (". . . members who desire physical comforts are encouraged to bring cushions or rugs, as in the early Spartan days of the Society . . .") an audience of over 500 turned up to the first show, which included two G.P.O. films and *Hostages*. The monthly bulletin issued by this Society is lively and stimulating; it covers, among other things, all releases in Belfast cinemas for the current month.

Manchester and Salford report that their membership is expected shortly to reach the 900 mark. Herbert Hodge's lecture on "Movies and the Millions" was a great success; films soon to be shown include *Men in Danger*, *Education de Prince*, and *Drame de Shanghai*.

The Scottish Film Festival

In previous years this festival has been notable for the high quality of amateur work which it has attracted. It is good news that the Scottish Film Council has decided to keep it going in spite of the war. The final adjudication and public performance will be on April 27 in the Lyric Theatre, Glasgow; the last date for entries is March 30 and the last date for sending in films April 6. The adjudicators are Oliver Bell, Director of the British Film Institute (the Scottish Film Council's parent body); H. Forsyth Hardy, film critic of *The Scotsman;* William Jeffrey, film critic of *The Glasgow Herald;* and C. A. Oakley, chairman of the Glasgow Film Society.

There will be five classes. Non-fiction (documentary, instructional); fiction (story-films, photoplays); colour; Scottish (Scottish competitors only), and a section for novices who have not previously won a prize in any film competition. Further information and entry forms may be obtained from A. Russell Borland, Secretary, Scottish Film Council, 2 Newton Place, Glasgow, C.3, or from the British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1.

NEW FOREIGN FILMS

(All films recommended in this column are the latest continentals viewable in London, and are in our opinion suitable for Film Society showing. We are unable to indicate at what dates they will be available for booking.)

Remontons les Champs Elysées. *Director:* Guitry. *Actors:* Sacha Guitry. *Distributors:* Unity Ltd.

THIS IS A short history of France, told by Sacha Guitry, acted by Sacha Guitry, and altered to suit Sacha Guitry. It is impossible to count the number of parts he plays in the film, and the joke is a good one—up to a point. But the film lacks the lightness of touch of *Le Roman d'un Tricheur*. The English translation is good.

Les Rois du Sport. *Director:* Colombier. *Actors:* Raimu, Fernandel. *Distributors:* Curzon Ltd.

COMEDY. The best part Fernandel has had since *Le Rosier de Mme Husson*. The plot centres round the fact that circumstances compel him, a waiter, to be in succession a goalkeeper, a racing motorist and a champion boxer. Outstanding sequences are the waiters' race in the beginning, which Raimu wins by bringing down the opposition with banana skins; the football match, with Fernandel limbering up his gawky legs, and explaining his inefficiency as part of his strategy; and the final fight, when Fernandel, looking like a runaway ostrich, makes circles round his drugged opponent.

Pièges. *Director:* Siodmak. *Actors:* Maurice Chevalier, Erich von Stroheim, Pierre Renoir, Marie Dea. *Distributors:* Cinephone Ltd.

PSYCHOLOGICAL murder story. Treatment is French in the emphasis on detail and the humanisation of the characters, slightly Fritz Lang in the handling of the police and the murderer, with a touch of Hollywood in the glamorisation of Marie Dea and the design of the sets. Maurice Chevalier has two songs, but the rest of his part is straight, and he plays it with a fair measure of feeling. Marie Dea is worth seeing in the part of the sensitive but self-assured dance hostess whom the police employ to trap the murderer. Erich von Stroheim has a small part which he plays stiffly and awkwardly.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Film Answers Back. An Historical Appreciation of the Cinema. E. W. and M. M. Robson. *John Lane, The Bodley Head.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

SETTING ASIDE, as not being worth discussion, the book's main thesis that anything from Hollywood must *a priori* be good movie, the particular allegations levelled at the German film-makers in pre-Nazi days are too serious to be left unchallenged. The thesis puts a subtly plausible argument that the German film of the years 1919-27 was a reflection of a degenerate "intellectualism" directly conducive to the growth of Nazi ideology. Film after film is quoted as heralding the Nazi mind. Despite the fact that *Caligari* was a film of small influence as far as its theme was concerned, the label "Caligarism" is coined to describe most of what has been called by reputable critics the Golden Age of the German film. Happily some of the people responsible for these "degenerate" films are now at hand to confirm that these allegations are mischievous, inaccurate and disrespectful. Whatever critical opinion may be held towards the German films of this period—*Caligari*, *Destiny*, *Waxworks*, *Warning Shadows*, *The Last Laugh* and the famous rest—they must at any rate command respect for their creative sincerity. They did not, however, as this book first implies and later contradicts, achieve a wide showing in the German theatres. More important, the post-War German intellectualism was not, as the authors think, a new thing arising out of the War but a hangover from movements in painting, music, theatre and literature that developed around 1911. The ages of the artists concerned confirm this. Such an attack on the individual creative work of men like Pick, Mayer, Leni, Robison and Lang is both libellous and unwarranted.

If given the power, it would seem that the authors, because of their gullible argument on "social" pretexts, as well as their skill in bending facts to fit their thesis, would burn the creative work of the German cinema with as much zest as Dr Goebbels burnt the books of the Weimar Republic.

Factually, the book makes remarkable reading. The Arbuckle case is misreported; a fundamentally wrong analysis is given of the *Potemkin* Odessa Steps sequence; Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* is described as a "story dealing with love troubles in Russia immediately before the war"; Pola Negri's *Carmen* and *Dubarry* are treated as different films from *Gypsy Blood* and *Passion* when they were, in fact, the same films with foreign titles. Such statements as *Scarface* being the first of a gangster cycle, together with many wrong credits (Ludwig Berger instead of Lang as the director of *Destiny*, Murnau instead of Dupont for *Vaudeville*, *St Petersburg* and not *Mother* as the first Pudovkin film to get English showing, *Karamazov* and not *The Living Corpse* as Otzep's first non-Soviet film, Ingram's *Magician* as being Hollywood instead of French-made, Constance instead of Norma Talmadge being the lead in *Smilin' Thru*, among many others), suggest that this book, which we note has been well received by several responsible critics, is as valuable as this typical extract: "Between the woman of 1908 and 1938 there is not thirty years' difference but three thousand years. And the change has been advanced as well as recorded, step by step, first by Mary Pickford, then by the luscious, sinuous vamp of the Theda Bara and Lya de Putti type, who disappeared to give way to the Elinor Glyn 'It' girl, Clara Bow, who was in turn supplanted by the Gloria Swanson type. Then came the Garbo and the Dietrich and the full-hipped Mae West who, in turn, have led to the much more individual and realist women of the American screen today." Deanna Durbin, Judy Garland and Jane Withers, please note.

War Begins at Home, Mass Observation Editors: Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge. *Chatto & Windus.* 9*s.* 6*d.*

MASS OBSERVATION is Documentary's newest cousin on the Public Relations family tree. It was not inappropriate that democracy's self-examination should have begun with Market Research into the citizen's home, with painstaking investigation of what he or she liked to eat and wear and use for decoration. Out of Market Research came the new publicity, no longer a haphazard affair, but based on the known habits of carefully graded samples of population, according to age, sex and economic level.

Into this widening field burst early in 1937 "poet and newspaper reporter Charles Madge and explorer and biologist Tom Harrisson", bringing a new addition to the technique already popularly associated with the American Dr Gallup, insisting that it was not enough to record the answers to formal questionnaires. Attention, they said, must be given to overheard conversations, the difference must be noted between what people say in public and in private, between what they think and what they do. As scientific as claiming to measure public opinion would be an attempt to read between the lines, to bring the science of anthropology hitherto used only on aborigines, to bear upon the mass-observed characteristics of the British people.

In this fashion the present book studies Britain going to war. Anthropologically, it claims not to draw conclusions: inevitably, it draws just as many conclusions as are necessitated by the bias of the Editors. In spite of this everybody has a great deal to learn from this book, particularly the politicians and the Press. The Press claims to represent Public Opinion, and the politicians study the behaviour of the Press, and think they have got a fair angle on to the will of the people. Yet, according to Mass Observation, at the end of August only one person in eight looked upon the Press at all favourably, and as for the politicians, all their attempts to influence the people by publicity campaigns have shown how badly out of touch they are—gas-masks, the blackout, saving, food and rationing, cinema closing times, being obvious examples. Also it appears that in normal times only 0.3 per cent of overheard conversations deal with politics anyway.

To clear up this confusion, and to replace the imaginings of the higher-ups, Mass Observation puts forward the documented views, in public and in private, of ordinary persons. Diaries, overheard conversations, results of questionnaires, factual censuses, speeches by politicians, posters, are all analysed and brought to bear on the present issue. This book claims to be democracy expressing its opinion about the war, and since this is a war for democracy, somebody had better pay attention to it.

How War Came. Raymond Gram Swing. *Nicholson & Watson.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

RAYMOND GRAM SWING is known to us as an American Commentator for the B.B.C. Back in America he does the same kind of job for the United States audience. There is, however, a slight difference of emphasis. Normally, he speaks three times a week over Station WOR, and consequently he has more time for details. He therefore chooses to commentate on the news as it comes along. Often he is talking about the news that is still hot on the front page. During the days immediately prior to September 3rd he was on the air three times a day. Those were days when events were moving faster than most men could think, and it was Mr Swing's job to help the man-in-the-street to think and think clearly. By relating the hot news to the main trend, by interpreting the sometimes bald official statement, by analysing the seemingly commonplace and by evaluating the seemingly catastrophic, he kept a level and watchful judgment before American listeners.

His new book is made up of his talks from March, 1939, to the outbreak of war, and to us it is a valuable and compact statement of a critical period. Being some 3,000 miles further away from the crisis area, Mr Swing was able to be more objective. His book is much more than merely a diary of these days, but it is a diary in an important sense, for it retains all the uncertainty of these times. It is no mere collection of smart prophecies. Through all the talks runs the thread of hope that war might yet be averted and Mr Swing will remind you of many things that seem to belong to a world longer dead than six months. He will remind you that we once believed in the possibility of an Anglo-Soviet agreement, that we did not always know that Italy would be neutral, and he will remind you that many men thought that September 3rd was the very eve of annihilation for millions of civilians.

But this book is important because Mr Swing has thrown a perspective round the close-up events of six months. Because he was doing this for an American audience his perspective is a wider one than is usually available to the Englishman-in-the-street. This is valuable. And the book becomes important as a picture of what many Americans must think about the war, about European politics and about Britain.

Historians had better put this book on their shelves because it is a picture of our times in a special sense: it is an account of what democratic radio had to offer the citizens of America in 1939 during a crisis of wide world significance.

NON-THEATRICAL FILM LIBRARIES

Note: Borrowers of films are asked to apply as much in advance as possible, to give alternative dates for bookings, and to return the films immediately after they have been shown so that others may make use of them. The terms of hire are liable to alteration with short notice.

British Council Film Department, 25 Savile Row, London, W.1. *Films of Britain*, 1940. This catalogue is for overseas use but provides useful synopses of at least 100 sound and silent films.

Electrical Development Association, 2 Savoy Hill, Strand, London, W.C.2. Three 16 mm. silent films and one 16 mm. sound film of electrical interest. Certain other films of direct advertising appeal are available only through members of the Association. No hire charge made for approved displays.

Film Centre, 34 Soho Square, W.1. *Movements Vibratoires*. A silent film on simple harmonic motion. French captions. A hire charge is made. 35 mm. and 16 mm.

Strand Film Company, 5a Upper St Martin's Lane, London, W.C.2. Eleven films available for non-theatrical distribution, mostly 35 mm. Films include *Aerial Milestones* (historical survey of British civil aviation), *Chapter and Verse* (survey of books and writers), *Give the Kids a Break*, and a number of others of Empire and general interest, including 3 silent Airways films on 16 mm. No hire charge made for approved displays.

Wallace Heaton, Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, London, W.1. Three catalogues. Sound 16 mm., silent 16 mm., silent 9.5 mm. The sound film catalogue contains a number of American feature films, including *Thunder Over Mexico*, together with some interest shorts. The silent 16 mm. catalogue contains a first-class list of early American, German and Russian silents, including *California Straight Ahead* and *Skinner's Dress Suit* (Reginald Denny), early Westerns, *The White Hell of Pitz Palu*, *Waxworks*, *Warning Shadows*, *General Line*, *Potemkin*, and *Mother*. Strong on early American comedy shorts, Larry Semon, Oliver Hardy, Lloyd Hamilton, Chaplins, etc. The 9.5 catalogue has a number of German films and includes *Siegfried* and *The Spy*, a wide selection of Chaplins, Snub Pollards, Paul Parrotts and the early English slapstick comedies featuring Walter Forde. A hire charge is made.

British Commercial Gas Association, Gas Industry House, 1 Grosvenor Place, London, S.W.1. Films on social subjects, domestic science, and the manufacture of gas. Includes *Children at School* and *New Worlds for Old*. Sound and a few silent. No hire charge for approved displays. 35 mm. and 16 mm.

Educational & General Services, Little Holt, Merton Lane, Highgate, London, N.6. A wide selection of silent films of all kinds, particularly of overseas interest, and a few sound films. A hire charge is made. Some prints for outright sale. 16 mm.

Empire Film Library, Imperial Institute, London, S.W.7. One of the best national libraries in the country. Films primarily of Empire subjects. With a useful subject index. Silent and sound. No hire charge for approved displays. Mostly 16 mm. with a few 35 mm.

Ensign Film Library, 88–89 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. Wide selection of all types of film including fiction, comedies, documentaries and films of geography, animal life and industry (many silent films). A hire charge is made. Some prints for outright sale. 16 mm.

Gaumont-British Instructional, Film House, Wardour Street, London, W.1. Catalogue No. 5 (1939). Many films on scientific subjects, geography, hygiene, history, language, natural history, sport. Excellent educational material. Sound and silent. Feature and story films also available. A hire charge is made. 35 mm. and 16 mm.

G.P.O. Film Library, Imperial Institute, London, S.W.7. Catalogue 1937 and supplements. Over 100 first-class films, mostly centred round communications. Supplement includes many documentaries such as *Night Mail*. Sound and silent. No hire charge for approved displays. 35 mm. and 16 mm.

Kodak Ltd., Kingsway, London, W.C.2. (*a*) *Kodascope Library*. Silent films of every kind, instructional, documentary, feature, western and comedy. Strong on early American comedies—Harry Langdon, Reginald Denny, Stan Laurel, Chaplin, etc. A hire charge is made. 16 mm. and 8 mm. (A separate *List of Educational Films*, extracted from the above, is also published. A number of films have teaching notes.) (*b*) *Medical Film Library*. Circulation restricted to members of medical profession. Some colour films. A hire charge is made. Some prints for outright sale. 16 mm. silent.

National Film Library, British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1. Only full members of the British Film Institute may borrow its films. A large catalogue containing some important early German films and *Nanook of the North*, otherwise industry, medicine, health and travel. Sound and silent. A hire charge is made. 35 mm. and 16 mm.

Pathescope, North Circular Road, Cricklewood, London, N.W.2. Wide selection of silent films, including cartoons, comedies, drama, documentary, travel, sport and interest subjects; also good selection of early American and German films. A hire charge is made. 9.5 mm.

Petroleum Films Bureau, 15 Hay Hill, Berkeley Square, London, W.1. Twenty-three technical and documentary films. Sound and silent. No hire charge for approved displays. 35 mm. and 16 mm.

Religious Film Library, 104 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. Sound films of religious and temperance appeal and a useful list of supporting films from other sources. Silent films are available. A hire charge is made. 16 mm.

Sound-Film Services, 10 Park Place, Cardiff. Library of selected sound films including Massingham's *And So to Work* and Pollard's *Dragon of Wales*. *Rome* and *Sahara* have French commentaries. In addition to specialised films some subjects of general entertainment nature. A hire charge is made. 16 mm.

Southern Railway Film Library, General Manager's Office, Waterloo Station, S.E.1. Seven silent 16 mm. films (one in colour) of a general nature, including *Building an Electric Coach*, *South African Fruit* (Southampton Docks to Covent Garden), and films on seaside towns. One film of Bournemouth on 9.5 mm. No hire charge for approved displays.

Workers' Film Association, 145 Wardour Street, London, W.1. Some outstanding sound films of democratic and co-operative interest, with an excellent selection of films from other sources. Full notes and suggestions for complete programmes. Sound and silent. A hire charge is made. Some prints for outright sale. 35 mm. and 16 mm.

CATALOGUE OF THE MONTH

Films of Britain, 1940, catalogue of the British Council Film Department, 25 Savile Row, London, W.1, is a cross-section of British documentary films for overseas use. It represents a determined drive to put the decencies of British life on the screens of the world, and cuts across all sectional interests, making a wide selection from many sources, G.P.O., G.B.E., Strand, Petroleum Films Bureau and others; it lists also those films made by the British Council itself. It is a matter for regret that room could not be found for the world famous G.B.I. *Secrets of Life* series; such films in their way can do more for British prestige than half a dozen *Around the Village Greens*. The films listed range from *Workers and Jobs*, a frank statement of how the Ministry of Labour deals with the problems of unemployment, Cavalcanti's *Men in Danger* and Shaw's *Men of Africa*, to *Beside the Seaside*.

The lay-out of the catalogue is good, but the synopses are pedestrian. They read like any synopses from any film catalogue issued by any equipment manufacturer to catch the home-movie fan. One cannot tell, for example, that *Men in Danger*, *Men of Africa* and *Transfer of Power* differ from *So This is London* or *Western Highlands*. It is to be hoped that future editions will do something to set this right and to suggest how the films can be used. An overseas film society, receiving the catalogue, could not make up its mind from it what films would be suitable for its programme. There is no indication that films have been made in foreign languages, though this is certainly the case in some instances. For example most of the Shell films listed are available in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch. The catalogue is a step in the right direction, but it demands overhaul by someone familiar with the overseas non-theatrical field.

CORRESPONDENCE

DEAR SIR,

In his article about films at the New York World's Fair, your contributor, Richard Griffith, does not seem to have been particularly well informed.

For instance, it might interest both him and your readers to know that at the British Pavilion Cinema, amongst many others, fifteen recent G.P.O. films were shown. These were:

Big Money
The City
The Islanders
Men in Danger
Spare Time
Trade Tattoo
British Made
North Sea
Calendar of the Year
How the Telephone Works
Job in a Million
Rainbow Dance
Speaking from America
What's on Today
Night Mail

Many of these were specially made for the Fair and the reports show that they were exceedingly well received there.

Thanking you for the publication of the present note, I remain,

Yours faithfully,

A. CAVALCANTI

G.P.O. Film Unit, 21 Soho Square, W.

DEAR SIRS,

May I, a journalist on the staff of the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, express my appreciation of your excellent paper.

I would like to suggest however that more space be occupied with reviews of story films, which are, after all, the chief attraction of the modern cinema. You show such detailed analysis of every film you criticise and thus provide such a definite guide when one 'shops' for one's films that it seems a pity to restrict yourselves to one or two films per month.

Again do you not think it would be a good idea to give short reviews of the films exhibited at the various film societies? I ask this because I have just paid my first visit to the Tyneside Film Society where they showed *The Rich Bride*, a Russian picture. I, having memories of that beautiful *Earth*, was sadly disappointed but would like to have known what was your opinion (you being now my criterion).

Yours faithfully,

GEOFFREY C. BOCCA

Newcastle-on-Tyne

[*Editorial Note:* Mr Bocca's suggestion regarding film society notes has already been adopted. The question of more reviews of feature films is largely a matter of space. We believe that our main job is to stick as closely as possible to documentary activities and problems; but we should be glad to hear what other readers think.]

WE ARE EIGHT

In 1932 Hitler was not in power. In 1932 the documentary film was in its infancy.

In 1932 the first number of SIGHT & SOUND was published . . .

The latest issue—completing the eighth volume—is now on sale. Quite a few people have been good enough to tell us that it's well worth Sixpence.

published by

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

4 Great Russell Street WC1

FACT AND OPINION

SINCE 1936 the German National Educational Film Bureau has produced 600 substandard size films. 250,000 copies of these are available to universities and schools, which possess a total of 36,000 substandard projectors.

* * * * *

News for the Tommies in France—news for you, too: FROM FEBRUARY 18 ONWARD PROGRAMMES FOR THE FORCES WILL RUN FOR TWELVE HOURS—FROM 11 A.M. TO 11 P.M.

Which means, for home listeners, a twelve-hour stretch when programmes of a light, cheerful, melodious nature are guaranteed.

So, if you want to avoid high-browism, education and food for thought—just tune your set to 342 m., *and leave it there.*

(JONAH BARRINGTON in the *Daily Express*)

* * * * *

Foreign newsreels with Swedish dialogue already recorded on them may no longer be imported into Sweden. This ban has been established by the Government owing to the continued importation of foreign propaganda films (presumably German) with tendentious Swedish commentaries.

* * * * *

"With an orchestra playing dimly in the background of a huge sound-proof stage, the recording featured a chorus of very high sopranos, together with a vibraphone, a metal percussion instrument similar in form to a zylophone, but containing motor-driven resonators for sustaining the tone and producing a vibrato effect. The microphone was placed in an open steel vault at one side of the stage."

(*Paramount's description of the recording of Dr Ernst Toch's music for "The Cat and the Canary".*)

* * * * *

The University of San Antonio has established a library of sound films to serve the schools and colleges of Southern Texas and the needs of the University itself.

* * * * *

The debate in the House of Lords on the much-discussed Unity Mitford item in British Paramount News produced, among other things, a vigorous defence of the freedom of the newsreel companies by Lord Dufferin. He said that if every time an abuse of freedom was committed they allowed that to be an opportunity for further Government control, further censorship, and further denial of liberty, then, he believed, they were going to erode, in a very few years, the whole rock of personal liberty in which he, as a Conservative, and everybody else in that House in their own idiom believed.

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From Mass Observation comes a weekly newsletter, in pocket size, called, succinctly enough, *US*. The first issue contains "Belisha Backwash" and "Food in Wartime". For future issues M.O. studies of Haw-Haw, Holidays, and the Southwark By-election are promised. *US* costs 5*s*. a quarter or £1 a year, from 6 Grotes Buildings, Blackheath, London, S.E.3.

A FILM A WEEK

IN THE LAST THREE YEARS Merton Park Studios Ltd., associated with Publicity Films Ltd., and Sound-Services Ltd., PRODUCED ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY FILMS—A FILM A WEEK.

THESE WOULD BE REMARKABLE figures even if they implied that a film was written, shot, edited and released once every seven days. But they mean more than that: for many of these films were complicated jobs involving most careful interpretation of a propaganda message. AND YET EACH YEAR FIFTY FILMS ARE MADE AT MERTON PARK.

THE SOLUTION is to be found in the fact that we often have as many as 15 films in course of production at the same time. This, in turn, is only possible because we have THE ORGANISATION NECESSARY TO ENSURE THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF SEVERAL PRODUCTION UNITS WORKING SIMULTANEOUSLY.

THAT IS WHY we can cope successfully with such a large number of films, and at the same time ensure that they achieve the objects for which they have been made.

STRAND FILMS

MAKERS OF QUALITY SHORTS

Films completed for release this quarter

THESE CHILDREN ARE SAFE

GULLIBLE GULL

MEN OF AFRICA

AFRICAN SKYWAY

WINGS OVER THE EMPIRE

SYDNEY EASTBOUND

" . . . notable practitioners in this department" (Documentary Films)

News Chronicle

DONALD TAYLOR, Managing Director

Owned and published by Film Centre Ltd., 34 Soho Square, London, W.1, and printed by Simson Shand Ltd., The Shenval Press, London and Hertford